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Answer, by Matt Pierard 2017

ROBERT BARR
RABINDRANATH TAGORE
INTERNATIONAL POETRY
FANNY GREYE LA SPINA

THE MAN WHO WAS NOT ON THE PASSENGER LIST

from: Project Gutenberg's *In a Steamer Chair And Other Stories*, by Robert Barr

*"The well-sworn Lie, franked to the world with all
The circumstance of proof,
Cringes abashed, and sneaks along the wall
At the first sight of Truth."*

The *Gibrontus* of the Hot Cross Bun Line was at one time the best ship of that justly celebrated fleet. All steamships have, of course, their turn at the head of the fleet until a better boat is built, but the *Gibrontus* is even now a reasonably fast and popular boat. An accident happened on board the *Gibrontus* some years ago which was of small importance to the general public, but of some moment to Richard Keeling—for it killed him. The poor man got only a line or two in the papers when the steamer arrived at New York, and then they spelled his name wrong. It had happened something like this: Keeling was wandering around very late at night, when he should have been in his bunk, and he stepped on a dark place that he thought was solid. As it happened, there was nothing between him and the bottom of the hold but space. They buried Keeling at sea, and the officers knew absolutely nothing about the matter when inquisitive passengers, hearing rumours, questioned them. This state of things very often exists both on sea and land, as far as officials are concerned. Mrs. Keeling, who had been left in England while her husband went to America to make his fortune, and tumbled down a hole instead, felt aggrieved at the company. The company said that Keeling had no business to be nosing around dark places on the deck at that time of night, and doubtless their contention was just. Mrs. Keeling, on the other hand, held that a steamer had no right to have such mantraps open at any time, night or day, without having them properly guarded, and in that she was also probably correct. The company was very sorry, of course, that the thing had occurred; but they refused to pay for Keeling unless compelled to do so by the law of the land, and there matters stood. No one can tell what the law of the land will do when it is put in motion, although many people thought that if Mrs. Keeling had brought a suit against the Hot Cross Bun Company she would have won it. But Mrs. Keeling was a poor woman, and you have to put a penny in the slot when you want the figures of justice to work, so the unfortunate creature signed something which the lawyer of the company had written out, and accepted the few pounds which Keeling had paid for Room 18 on the *Gibrontus*. It would seem that this ought to have settled the matter, for the lawyer told Mrs. Keeling he thought the company acted very generously in refunding the passage money; but it didn't settle the matter. Within a year from that time, the company voluntarily paid Mrs. Keeling £2100 for her husband. Now that the occurrence is called to your mind, you will perhaps remember the editorial one of the leading London dailies had on the extraordinary circumstance, in which it was very ably shown that the old saying about corporations having no souls to be condemned or bodies to be kicked did not apply in these days

of commercial honour and integrity. It was a very touching editorial, and it caused tears to be shed on the Stock Exchange, the members having had no idea, before reading it, that they were so noble and generous.

How, then, was it that the Hot Cross Bun Company did this commendable act when their lawyer took such pains to clear them of all legal liability? The purser of the _Gibrontus_, who is now old and superannuated, could probably tell you if he liked.

When the negotiations with Mrs. Keeling had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion by the lawyer of the company, and when that gentleman was rubbing his hands over his easy victory, the good ship _Gibrontus_ was steaming out of the Mersey on her way to New York. The stewards in the grand saloon were busy getting things in order for dinner, when a wan and gaunt passenger spoke to one of them.

"Where have you placed me at table?" he asked.

"What name, sir?" asked the steward.

"Keeling."

The steward looked along the main tables, up one side and down the other, reading the cards, but nowhere did he find the name he was in search of. Then he looked at the small tables, but also without success.

"How do you spell it, sir?" he asked the patient passenger.

"K-double-e-l-i-n-g."

"Thank you, sir."

Then he looked up and down the four rows of names on the passenger list he held in his hand, but finally shook his head.

"I can't find your name on the passenger list," he said. "I'll speak to the purser, sir."

"I wish you would," replied the passenger in a listless way, as if he had not much interest in the matter. The passenger, whose name was not on the list, waited until the steward returned. "Would you mind stepping into the purser's room for a moment, sir? I'll show you the way, sir."

When the passenger was shown into the purser's room that official said to him, in the urbane manner of pursers--

"Might I look at your ticket, sir?"

The passenger pulled a long pocket-book from the inside of his coat, opened it, and handed the purser the document it contained. The purser scrutinized it sharply, and then referred to a list he had on the desk

before him.

"This is very strange," he said at last. "I never knew such a thing to occur before, although, of course, it is always possible. The people on shore have in some unaccountable manner left your name out of my list. I am sorry you have been put to any inconvenience, sir."

"There has been no inconvenience so far," said the passenger, "and I trust there will be none. You find the ticket regular, I presume?"

"Quite so--quite so," replied the purser. Then, to the waiting steward, "Give Mr. Keeling any place he prefers at the table which is not already taken. You have Room 18."

"That was what I bought at Liverpool."

"Well, I see you have the room to yourself, and I hope you will find it comfortable. Have you ever crossed with us before, sir? I seem to recollect your face."

"I have never been in America."

"Ah! I see so many faces, of course, that I sometimes fancy I know a man when I don't. Well, I hope you will have a pleasant voyage, sir."

"Thank you."

No. 18 was not a popular passenger. People seemed instinctively to shrink from him, although it must be admitted that he made no advances. All went well until the Gibrontus was about half-way over. One forenoon the chief officer entered the captain's room with a pale face, and, shutting the door after him, said--

"I am very sorry to have to report, sir, that one of the passengers has fallen into the hold."

"Good heavens!" cried the captain. "Is he hurt?"

"He is killed, sir."

The captain stared aghast at his subordinate.

"How did it happen? I gave the strictest orders those places were on no account to be left unguarded."

Although the company had held to Mrs. Keeling that the captain was not to blame, their talk with that gentleman was of an entirely different tone.

"That is the strange part of it, sir. The hatch has not been opened this voyage, sir, and was securely bolted down."

"Nonsense! Nobody will believe such a story! Some one has been careless! Ask the purser to come here, please."

When the purser saw the body, he recollected, and came as near fainting as a purser can.

They dropped Keeling overboard in the night, and the whole affair was managed so quietly that nobody suspected anything, and, what is the most incredible thing in this story, the New York papers did not have a word about it. What the Liverpool office said about the matter nobody knows, but it must have stirred up something like a breeze in that strictly business locality. It is likely they pooh-poohed the whole affair, for, strange to say, when the purser tried to corroborate the story with the dead man's ticket the document was nowhere to be found.

The Gibrontus started out on her next voyage from Liverpool with all her colours flying, but some of her officers had a vague feeling of unrest within them which reminded them of the time they first sailed on the heaving seas. The purser was seated in his room, busy, as pursers always are at the beginning of a voyage, when there was a rap at the door.

"Come in!" shouted the important official, and there entered unto him a stranger, who said--"Are you the purser?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"I have room No. 18."

"What!" cried the purser, with a gasp, almost jumping from his chair. Then he looked at the robust man before him, and sank back with a sigh of relief. It was not Keeling.

"I have room No. 18," continued the passenger, "and the arrangement I made with your people in Liverpool was that I was to have the room to myself. I do a great deal of shipping over your--"

"Yes, my dear sir," said the purser, after having looked rapidly over his list, "you have No. 18 to yourself."

"So I told the man who is unpacking his luggage there; but he showed me his ticket, and it was issued before mine. I can't quite understand why your people should--"

"What kind of a looking man is he?"

"A thin, unhealthy, cadaverous man, who doesn't look as if he would last till the voyage ends. I don't want him for a room mate, if I have to have one. I think you ought--"

"I will, sir. I will make it all right. I suppose, if it should happen that a mistake has been made, and he has the prior claim to the room, you would not mind taking No. 24--it is a larger and better room."

"That will suit me exactly."

So the purser locked his door and went down to No. 18.

"Well?" he said to its occupant.

"Well," answered Mr. Keeling, looking up at him with his cold and fishy eyes.

"You're here again, are you?"

"I'm here again, and I _will_ be here again. And again and again, and again and again."

"Now, what the--" Then the purser hesitated a moment, and thought perhaps he had better not swear, with that icy, clammy gaze fixed upon him. "What object have you in all this?"

"Object? The very simple one of making your company live up to its contract. From Liverpool to New York, my ticket reads. I paid for being landed in the United States, not for being dumped overboard in mid-ocean. Do you think you can take me over? You have had two tries at it and have not succeeded. Yours is a big and powerful company too."

"If you know we can't do it, then why do you--?" The purser hesitated.

"Pester you with my presence?" suggested Mr. Keeling. "Because I want you to do justice. Two thousand pounds is the price, and I will raise it one hundred pounds every trip." This time the New York papers got hold of the incident, but not of its peculiar features. They spoke of the extraordinary carelessness of the officers in allowing practically the same accident to occur twice on the same boat. When the Gibrontus reached Liverpool all the officers, from the captain down, sent in their resignations. Most of the sailors did not take the trouble to resign, but cut for it. The managing director was annoyed at the newspaper comments, but laughed at the rest of the story. He was invited to come over and interview Keeling for his own satisfaction, most of the officers promising to remain on the ship if he did so. He took Room 18 himself. What happened I do not know, for the purser refused to sail again on the Gibrontus, and was given another ship.

But this much is certain. When the managing director got back, the company generously paid Mrs. Keeling £2100.



THE AUSPICIOUS VISION

from: Project Gutenberg's *Mashi and Other Stories*, by Rabindranath Tagore

Kantichandra was young; yet after his wife's death he sought no second partner, and gave his mind to the hunting of beasts and birds. His body was long and slender, hard and agile; his sight keen; his aim unerring. He dressed like a countryman, and took with him Hira Singh the wrestler, Chakkanlal, Khan Saheb the musician, Mian Saheb, and many others. He had no lack of idle followers.

In the month of Agrahayan Kanti had gone out shooting near the swamp of Nydighi with a few sporting companions. They were in boats, and an army of servants, in boats also, filled the bathing-ghats. The village women found it well-nigh impossible to bathe or to draw water. All day long, land and water trembled to the firing of the guns; and every evening musicians killed the chance of sleep.

One morning as Kanti was seated in his boat cleaning a favourite gun, he suddenly started at what he thought was the cry of wild duck. Looking up, he saw a village maiden, coming to the water's edge, with two white ducklings clasped to her breast. The little stream was almost stagnant. Many weeds choked the current. The girl put the birds into the water, and watched them anxiously. Evidently the presence of the sportsmen was the cause of her care and not the wildness of the ducks.

The girl's beauty had a rare freshness--as if she had just come from Vishwakarma's[8] workshop. It was difficult to guess her age. Her figure was almost a woman's, but her face was so childish that clearly the world had left no impression there. She seemed not to know herself that she had reached the threshold of youth.

[8] The divine craftsman in Hindu mythology.

Kanti's gun-cleaning stopped for a while. He was fascinated. He had not expected to see such a face in such a spot. And yet its beauty suited its surroundings better than it would have suited a palace. A bud is lovelier on the bough than in a golden vase. That day the blossoming reeds glittered in the autumn dew and morning sun, and the fresh, simple face set in the midst was like a picture of festival to Kanti's enchanted mind. Kalidos has forgotten to sing how Siva's Mountain-Queen herself sometimes has come to the young Ganges, with just such ducklings in her breast. As he gazed, the maiden started in terror, and hurriedly took back the ducks into her bosom with a half-articulate cry of pain. In another moment, she had left the river-bank and disappeared into the bamboo thicket hard by. Looking round, Kanti saw one of his men pointing an unloaded gun at the ducks. He at once went up to him, wrenched away his gun, and bestowed on his cheek a prodigious slap. The astonished humourist finished his joke on the floor. Kanti went on cleaning his gun.

But curiosity drove Kanti to the thicket wherein he had seen the girl disappear. Pushing his way through, he found himself in the yard of a well-to-do householder. On one side was a row of conical thatched barns, on the other a clean cow-shed, at the end of which grew a _zizyph_ bush. Under the bush was seated the girl he had seen that morning, sobbing over a wounded dove, into whose yellow beak she was trying to wring a little water from the moist corner of her garment. A grey cat, its fore-paws on her knee, was looking eagerly at the bird, and every now and then, when it got too forward, she kept it in its place by a warning tap on the nose.

This little picture, set in the peaceful mid-day surroundings of the householder's yard, instantly impressed itself on Kanti's sensitive heart. The checkered light and shade, flickering beneath the delicate foliage of the _zizyph_, played on the girl's lap. Not far off a cow was chewing the cud, and lazily keeping off the flies with slow movements of its head and tail. The north wind whispered softly in the rustling bamboo thickets. And she who at dawn on the river-bank had looked like the Forest Queen, now in the silence of noon showed the eager pity of the Divine Housewife. Kanti, coming in upon her with his gun, had a sense of intrusion. He felt like a thief caught red-handed. He longed to explain that it was not he who had hurt the dove. As he wondered how he should begin, there came a call of 'Sudha!' from the house. The girl jumped up. 'Sudha!' came the voice again. She took up her dove, and ran within. 'Sudha,' [9] thought Kanti, 'what an appropriate name!'

[9] _Sudha_ means nectar, ambrosia.

Kanti returned to the boat, handed his gun to his men, and went over to the front door of the house. He found a middle-aged Brahmin, with a peaceful, clean-shaven face, seated on a bench outside, and reading a devotional book. Kanti saw in his kindly, thoughtful face something of the tenderness which shone in the face of the maiden.

Kanti saluted him, and said: 'May I ask for some water, sir? I am very thirsty.' The elder man welcomed him with eager hospitality, and, offering him a seat on the bench, went inside and fetched with his own hands a little brass plate of sugar wafers and a bell-metal vessel full of water.

After Kanti had eaten and drunk, the Brahmin begged him to introduce himself. Kanti gave his own name, his father's name, and the address of his home, and then said in the usual way: 'If I can be of any service, sir, I shall deem myself fortunate.'

'I require no service, my son,' said Nabin Banerji; 'I have only one care at present.'

'What is that, sir?' said Kanti.

'It is my daughter, Sudha, who is growing up' (Kanti smiled as he thought of her babyish face), 'and for whom I have not yet been able to find a worthy bridegroom. If I could only see her well married, all my debt to this world would be paid. But there is no suitable bridegroom here, and I cannot leave my charge of Gopinath here, to search for a husband elsewhere.'

'If you would see me in my boat, sir, we would have a talk about the marriage of your daughter.' So saying, Kanti repeated his salute and went back. He then sent some of his men into the village to inquire, and in answer heard nothing but praise of the beauty and virtues of the Brahmin's daughter.

When next day the old man came to the boat on his promised visit, Kanti bent low in salutation, and begged the hand of his daughter for himself. The Brahmin was so much overcome by this undreamed-of piece of good fortune--for Kanti not only belonged to a well-known Brahmin family, but was also a landed proprietor of wealth and position--that at first he could hardly utter a word in reply. He thought there must have been some mistake, and at length mechanically repeated: 'You desire to marry my daughter?'

'If you will deign to give her to me,' said Kanti.

'You mean Sudha?' he asked again.

'Yes,' was the reply.

'But will you not first see and speak to her----?'

Kanti, pretending he had not seen her already, said: 'Oh, that we shall do at the moment of the Auspicious Vision.' [10]

[10] After betrothal the prospective bride and bridegroom are not supposed to see each other again till that part of the wedding ceremony which is called _the Auspicious Vision_.

In a voice husky with emotion the old man said: 'My Sudha is indeed a good girl, well skilled in all the household arts. As you are so generously taking her on trust, may she never cause you a moment's regret. This is my blessing!'

The brick-built mansion of the Mazumdars had been borrowed for the wedding ceremony, which was fixed for next _Magh_, as Kanti did not wish to delay. In due time the bridegroom arrived on his elephant, with drums and music and with a torchlight procession, and the ceremony began.

When the bridal couple were covered with the scarlet screen for the rite of the Auspicious Vision, Kanti looked up at his bride. In that

bashful, downcast face, crowned with the wedding coronet and bedecked with sandal paste, he could scarcely recognise the village maiden of his fancy, and in the fulness of his emotion a mist seemed to becloud his eyes.

At the gathering of women in the bridal chamber, after the wedding ceremony was over, an old village dame insisted that Kanti himself should take off his wife's bridal veil. As he did so he started back. It was not the same girl.

Something rose from within his breast and pierced into his brain. The light of the lamps seemed to grow dim, and darkness to tarnish the face of the bride herself.

At first he felt angry with his father-in-law. The old scoundrel had shown him one girl, and married him to another. But on calmer reflection he remembered that the old man had not shown him any daughter at all--that it was all his own fault. He thought it best not to show his arrant folly to the world, and took his place again with apparent calmness.

He could swallow the powder; he could not get rid of its taste. He could not bear the merry-makings of the festive throng. He was in a blaze of anger with himself as well as with everybody else.

Suddenly he felt the bride, seated by his side, give a little start and a suppressed scream; a leveret, scampering into the room, had brushed across her feet. Close upon it followed the girl he had seen before. She caught up the leveret into her arms, and began to caress it with an affectionate murmuring. 'Oh, the mad girl!' cried the women as they made signs to her to leave the room. She heeded them not, however, but came and unconcernedly sat in front of the wedded pair, looking into their faces with a childish curiosity. When a maidservant came and took her by the arm to lead her away, Kanti hurriedly interposed, saying, 'Let her be.'

'What is your name?' he then went on to ask her.

The girl swayed backwards and forwards but gave no reply. All the women in the room began to titter.

Kanti put another question: 'Have those ducklings of yours grown up?'

The girl stared at him as unconcernedly as before.

The bewildered Kanti screwed up courage for another effort, and asked tenderly after the wounded dove, but with no avail. The increasing laughter in the room betokened an amusing joke.

At last Kanti learned that the girl was deaf and dumb, the companion of all the animals and birds of the locality. It was but by chance that

she rose the other day when the name of Sudha was called.

Kanti now received a second shock. A black screen lifted from before his eyes. With a sigh of intense relief, as of escape from calamity, he looked once more into the face of his bride. Then came the true Auspicious Vision. The light from his heart and from the smokeless lamps fell on her gracious face; and he saw it in its true radiance, knowing that Nabin's blessing would find fulfilment.



THE DOMINION OF AUSTRALIA (A FORECAST, 1877)

by James Brunton Stephens.

from: The Project Gutenberg Etext of *An Anthology of Australian Verse*

She is not yet; but he whose ear
Thrills to that finer atmosphere
Where footfalls of appointed things,
Reverberant of days to be,
Are heard in forecast echoings,
Like wave-beats from a viewless sea --
Hears in the voiceful tremors of the sky
Auroral heralds whispering, "She is nigh."

She is not yet; but he whose sight
Foreknows the advent of the light,
Whose soul to morning radiance turns
Ere night her curtain hath withdrawn,
And in its quivering folds discerns
The mute monitions of the dawn,
With urgent sense strained onward to descry
Her distant tokens, starts to find Her nigh.

Not yet her day. How long "not yet"? . . .
There comes the flush of violet!
And heavenward faces, all aflame
With sanguine imminence of morn,
Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim
The Day of The Dominion born.
Prelusive baptism! -- ere the natal hour
Named with the name and prophecy of power.

Already here to hearts intense,
A spirit-force, transcending sense,
In heights unscaled, in deeps unstirred,
Beneath the calm, above the storm,
She waits the incorporating word
To bid her tremble into form.
Already, like divining-rods, men's souls
Bend down to where the unseen river rolls; --

For even as, from sight concealed,
By never flush of dawn revealed,
Nor e'er illumed by golden noon,
Nor sunset-streaked with crimson bar,
Nor silver-spanned by wake of moon,
Nor visited of any star,
Beneath these lands a river waits to bless
(So men divine) our utmost wilderness, --

Rolls dark, but yet shall know our skies,
Soon as the wisdom of the wise
Conspires with nature to disclose
The blessing prisoned and unseen,
Till round our lessening wastes there glows
A perfect zone of broadening green, --
Till all our land, Australia Felix called,
Become one Continent-Isle of Emerald;

So flows beneath our good and ill
A viewless stream of Common Will,
A gathering force, a present might,
That from its silent depths of gloom
At Wisdom's voice shall leap to light,
And hide our barren feuds in bloom,
Till, all our sundering lines with love o'ergrown,
Our bounds shall be the girdling seas alone.



THE CITY OF FALLING LEAVES

from the Project Gutenberg EBook of *Men, Women and Ghosts*, by Amy Lowell

Leaves fall,
Brown leaves,
Yellow leaves streaked with brown.
They fall,

Flutter,
Fall again.
The brown leaves,
And the streaked yellow leaves,
Loosen on their branches
And drift slowly downwards.
One,
One, two, three,
One, two, five.
All Venice is a falling of Autumn leaves--
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.

"That sonnet, Abate,
Beautiful,
I am quite exhausted by it.
Your phrases turn about my heart
And stifle me to swooning.
Open the window, I beg.
Lord! What a strumming of fiddles and mandolins!
'Tis really a shame to stop indoors.
Call my maid, or I will make you lace me yourself.
Fie, how hot it is, not a breath of air!
See how straight the leaves are falling.
Marianna, I will have the yellow satin caught up with silver fringe,
It peeps out delightfully from under a mantle.
Am I well painted to-day, 'caro Abate mio'?
You will be proud of me at the 'Ridotto', hey?
Proud of being 'Cavalier Servente' to such a lady?"
"Can you doubt it, 'Bellissima Contessa'?
A pinch more rouge on the right cheek,
And Venus herself shines less..."
"You bore me, Abate,
I vow I must change you!
A letter, Achmet?
Run and look out of the window, Abate.
I will read my letter in peace."
The little black slave with the yellow satin turban
Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.
His yellow turban and black skin
Are gorgeous--barbaric.
The yellow satin dress with its silver flashings
Lies on a chair
Beside a black mantle and a black mask.
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous--barbaric.
The lady reads her letter,
And the leaves drift slowly
Past the long windows.
"How silly you look, my dear Abate,
With that great brown leaf in your wig.

Pluck it off, I beg you,
Or I shall die of laughing."

A yellow wall
Aflare in the sunlight,
Chequered with shadows,
Shadows of vine leaves,
Shadows of masks.
Masks coming, printing themselves for an instant,
Then passing on,
More masks always replacing them.
Masks with tricorns and rapiers sticking out behind
Pursuing masks with plumes and high heels,
The sunlight shining under their insteps.
One,
One, two,
One, two, three,
There is a thronging of shadows on the hot wall,
Filigreed at the top with moving leaves.
Yellow sunlight and black shadows,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous-barbaric.
Two masks stand together,
And the shadow of a leaf falls through them,
Marking the wall where they are not.
From hat-tip to shoulder-tip,
From elbow to sword-hilt,
The leaf falls.
The shadows mingle,
Blur together,
Slide along the wall and disappear.
Gold of mosaics and candles,
And night blackness lurking in the ceiling beams.
Saint Mark's glitters with flames and reflections.
A cloak brushes aside,
And the yellow of satin
Licks out over the coloured inlays of the pavement.
Under the gold crucifixes
There is a meeting of hands
Reaching from black mantles.
Sighing embraces, bold investigations,
Hide in confessionals,
Sheltered by the shuffling of feet.
Gorgeous-barbaric
In its mail of jewels and gold,
Saint Mark's looks down at the swarm of black masks;
And outside in the palace gardens brown leaves fall,
Flutter,
Fall.
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.

Blue-black, the sky over Venice,
With a pricking of yellow stars.
There is no moon,
And the waves push darkly against the prow
Of the gondola,
Coming from Malamocco
And streaming toward Venice.
It is black under the gondola hood,
But the yellow of a satin dress
Glares out like the eye of a watching tiger.
Yellow compassed about with darkness,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous--barbaric.
The boatman sings,
It is Tasso that he sings;
The lovers seek each other beneath their mantles,
And the gondola drifts over the lagoon, aslant to the coming dawn.
But at Malamocco in front,
In Venice behind,
Fall the leaves,
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.
They fall,
Flutter,
Fall.



SEVEN MISTS

by E. P. CHASE (Magdalen)

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Oxford Poetry*, 1919, by Various

The beauty of the High is not in brilliance
Nor in a florid sculpturing of stone,
Nor radiant colours, brave design, smooth stones,
But the wide curve and placid flow,--and that
St. Mary's spire and seven twilight mists
Are hanging over Oxford towers to-night.

I am clothed with furtive light
Reflected from that pallid sun
When it sets, hardly bright,

Behind Merton tower, daylight done.

When the moon, silver-hued,
Through Cowley generated mist
Tears its way and glimmers nude
Above Magdalen tower, it keeps tryst

With that spirit of my soul
Which would glide through Oxford streets,
Still, unseen, without control,
With wide eyes scanning whom it meets.



The Project Gutenberg eBook,

Old Mr. Wiley, by Fanny Greye La Spina

"He just lies here tossing and moaning until he's so weak that he sinks into a kind of coma," said the boy's father huskily. "There doesn't seem anything particular the matter with him now but weakness. Only," he choked, "that he doesn't care much about getting well."

Miss Beaver kept her eyes on that thin little body outlined by the fine linen sheet. She caught her breath and bit her lower lip to check its trembling. So pitiful, that small scion of a long line of highly placed aristocratic and wealthy forebears, that her cool, capable hand went out involuntarily to soothe the fevered childish brow. She wanted suddenly to gather the little body into her warm arms, against her kind breast. Her emotion, she realized, was far from professional; Frank Wiley IV had somehow laid a finger on her heartstrings.

"If you can rouse him from this lethargy and help him find some interest in living," Frank Wiley III said thickly, "you won't find me unappreciative, Miss Beaver."

The nurse contemplated that small, apathetic patient in silence. Doctor Parris had warned her that unless the boy's interest could somehow be stimulated, the little fellow would die from sheer lack of incentive to live. Her emotion moistened her eyes and constricted her throat muscles. She had to clear her throat before she could speak.

"I can only promise to do my very best for this dear little boy," she said hurriedly. "No human being can do more than his best."

"Doctor Parris tells me you have been uniformly successful with the cases he's put you on. I hope," the young father entreated, "that you'll follow your usual precedent."

"The doctor is too kind," murmured Miss Beaver with slightly lifted brows. "I fear he gives me more credit than I deserve."

"There I hope you're wrong. He calls you an intuitive psychic. It is upon your intuitions that I'm banking now. My affection hampers me from fathoming Frank's inner-most thoughts. If I were really sure what he needed most, I'd get it for him if it were a spotted giraffe," declared his father passionately. "But I'm unable to go deeply enough into his real thoughts."

"If his own father cannot think of something he would care for enough to make him want to live, how can an outsider find out what he might be wanting?" argued the nurse, a touch of resentment in her voice. "Would not his own mother know what would make him want to take hold on life?"

There was an awkward pause.

"His mother," began Frank Wiley III and was interrupted by a light tap on the door panel, at which he went silent, turning away as if relieved to escape any explanation.

The door swung open, permitting the entrance of a young and very pretty woman, one who knew exactly what a charming picture she made in jade negligee over peach pajamas. About her exceedingly well-shaped head ash-blonde hair lay in close artificial waves. She was such a distinctively blonde type that Miss Beaver could not control her slightly startled downward glance at the dark child tossing on the bed. Her upward look of bewilderment was met by Frank Wiley's faint smile.

"He takes after the founder of our family," said he in a low, almost confidential voice. "His great-grandfather was said to have had Indian blood in his veins, as well as a touch of old Spain. The boy doesn't look like his mother or me. He's a real throw-back."

The pretty woman had come across the room, pettishly lifting her silk clad shoulders. Through the straps of embroidered sandals red-tipped toes wriggled. At the tumbled bed and its small restless occupant she threw what appeared to Miss Beaver a distasteful glance, ignoring the nurse entirely although she had not met her previously and must have known that the strange young woman was the new night nurse.

"Do come to bed, Frank," she urged crossly, placing a proprietary hand on her husband's coat sleeve. "It won't do you any good to moon around in here and it might disturb Francis."

Miss Beaver stood by her patient's bed, her clear gray eyes full upon

young Mrs. Wiley. The nurse experienced a kind of disgust, together with one of those uncomfortable intuitions upon the reliability of which Doctor Parris was always depending. She knew, all at once, that Mrs. Wiley was that strange type of modern woman which makes a cult of personal beauty, taking wifehood lightly and submitting to maternity as infrequently as possible.

"I suppose you're right, Florry," the father conceded, with a last solicitous look at the exhausted child. "Miss Beaver...?"

The nurse nodded, her lips a tight red line.

"It would be better for the patient if the room were quiet and darkened," she said with decision.

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When the door had closed behind the pair, Miss Beaver busied herself making the child more comfortable for the night. She smoothed out the cool linen sheets, drawing them taut under the wasted little body. She bathed the hot face with water and alcohol. To all her ministrations the child submitted in a kind of lethargy, speaking no word, making no sign that he had noticed a different attendant. When she had quite finished, he breathed a long sigh of relaxation; his quivering, weak little body went suddenly limp, and Miss Beaver had a good scare as she bent over him, trying to bring back that weary and reluctant spirit to its exhausted mortal domicile.

It was by then nearly half past seven. The child lay supine; heavy-lidded eyes half opened upon this tormentress who had somehow succeeded in calling him back into the dimly lighted room from the shadows of Lethe's alluring banks. Miss Beaver, kneeling beside young Frank's bed, talked tenderly to him in a soft monotone. She made all manner of gratuitous promises, if only Frank would try like a good boy to get well. She told him firmly that he could, if he wanted to. She made her suggestions with gently persuasive voice, coloring all she said with the warmth of a heart peculiarly open to the unknown needs of the listless child. To those unknown needs she opened wide her spirit, crying within for enlightenment and help.

While she was thus occupied, she became aware of that sensation of being watched that is so startling when one considers oneself alone. Without rising, she turned her face quickly from the pillow of young Frank and looked across the bed. A member of the household about whom Doctor Parris had neglected to tell her was standing there, one finger on his lips which, though firm, wore a reassuring smile that immediately conveyed his warm friendliness. He was a well preserved elderly gentleman of aristocratic mien, clad in a bright blue garment of odd cut, his neck wound about with spotlessly white linen in lieu of a starched collar. His high nose, raised cheek-bones, flashing black eyes and olive skin contrasted in lively fashion with a heavy mane of white

hair. His eyes as well as his lips conveyed a kindliness which Miss Beaver's answering smile reciprocated.

Tapping his lips again with admonitory forefinger, the old gentleman now produced, with a broad smile, something from beneath his right arm. Leaning down, he set this carefully beside the listless child. As he put it down, it gave a whining little cry.

Young Frank's eyes widened incredulously. Miss Beaver kept him under intent regard as he turned his dark head on the pillow to see what it was that was sitting on the bed.

"Oh!" he cried in a kind of rapture and put one thin white hand outside the covers to touch the small creature that now stood wagging a brief tail in friendly fashion. "Is it mine?"

The child looked up at the old gentleman who once more, with serious mien and a significant movement of his head toward the door, gestured for silence. The boy's eyes blinked once or twice; then with a weak but ecstatic smile he laid a pale hand upon the furry coat of the little dog that began to bounce about, licking the hand that caressed it.

Miss Beaver told herself that the old gentleman had found a way to lay hold on young Frank's reluctant spirit. She watched color creep into the boy's face as he cuddled the little dog blissfully, and she drew a deep breath of heart-felt relief when the heavy eyelids drooped and the boy slipped off into a natural sleep, nothing like the heavy coma from which she had struggled so hard to bring him back earlier that night.

She looked up thankfully to meet the understanding gaze of the old gentleman who with that gesture of admonishment bent over and picked up the dog, tucked it under his blue-sleeved arm and went across the room to the door. He did not speak but Miss Beaver received the vivid impression that his visit would be repeated the following night; it was as if her sensitive intuitions could receive and register a wordless message from that other sympathetic soul.

The following morning found the lad refreshed and improved. His first waking thought was for the dog and in reply to his cautiously whispered inquiry Miss Beaver whispered back that his grandfather (the strong family resemblance made her sure it had been the boy's wise grandfather who had found a means of rousing the child from an all-but-fatal lethargy) had taken it with him but would bring it again that night. Miss Beaver wondered at herself for promising this but felt somehow sure that old Mr. Wiley would bring the pup without fail. She believed that she had read indomitable determination in those piercing black eyes; she knew inwardly that he would not rest until he had found that thing which would give young Frank renewed interest in living.

Although the child appeared, if anything, a trifle less apathetic the following day and Miss Beaver felt that each succeeding visit of old Mr.

Wiley with the fox-terrier would give the lad another push toward convalescence, yet the nurse did not feel inclined to mention openly that secret visit in the dead of night. The old gentleman's finger tapping his gravely smiling lips was one thing that restrained her; the other was the irritation betrayed, ingenuously enough, by the boy's mother during her early morning visit to the sickroom.

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Young Mrs. Wiley looked especially pretty in a pleated jade sports skirt, a white pullover sweater, a jade beret on her fair hair. Under one arm she carried a small white Pomeranian about whose neck flared a matching wide jade satin bow.

"Well, how is Francis this morning?" she inquired briskly with the determined manner of one dutifully performing an unpleasant task. "He looks better, doesn't he?"

Miss Beaver, to whom this inquiry was addressed, nodded shortly.

The boy did not look at his pretty young mother after his first indifferent glance as she entered the room. He lay in silence with closed eyes and compressed lips, a most unchildlike expression on his thin boyish face.

"Look, Francis! See how sweet Kiki looks with this big green bow!"

Mrs. Wiley dropped the Pomeranian on the bed. The dog snarled and snapped viciously. Frank thrust out one hand and gave the animal a pettish push. Bestowing a hard, cold glare on her son, Mrs. Wiley snatched up the growling dog in high indignation.

"There! I ask you, nurse, if that child isn't just unnatural. I thought boys liked dogs. Francis is queer. I believe he actually hates Kiki." She lifted the dog against her face, permitting it to loll its pink tongue against her carefully rouged cheek. "Pwecious ... Was it muvver's own pwecious ikkle Kiki? Francis," she addressed her son sharply, "you'll have to get over your nasty ugliness to poor little Kiki. It's a shame, the way you hate dogs!"

"But I don't hate dogs!" cried the boy vehemently, his voice breaking with indignant resentment. "It's just Kiki. I'd love to have a little dog of my very own, Mother. If you'd only let me have a little dog of my very own!" The faint voice died away in a sick wail. The boy's eyelids closed tightly against gushing tears.

Mrs. Wiley gave a short exclamation of impatience.

"Francis has the idea that a dirty mongrel would be nicer than a beautiful pedigreed dog like Kiki," she cried disgustedly.

"But why not try letting him have a dog of his own?" asked Miss Beaver ill-advisedly, her interest getting the better of her. "Perhaps it would give him interest enough ..."

"Nonsense!" snapped Mrs. Wiley sharply. "I won't have street mutts wandering around the house to irritate poor little Kiki. Nasty smelly common mongrels with fleas. Indeed not. I'm surprised at you, nurse, for making the suggestion."

With that, young Mrs. Wiley removed her vivid presence from the room, leaving Miss Beaver shrugging her shoulders and raising her eyebrows. And the little boy crying softly, the sheet pulled over his dark head.

"What's all this, Frankie?" asked the father's voice.

"_She_ won't let me have a dog of my own," sobbed the boy, coming out from under the concealing sheet, lips a-quiver, eyes humid.

Miss Beaver's lips compressed. He called his mother "She" as if she were an outsider....

Frank Wiley III stood for a moment looking at his son, then let himself gently down on the edge of the bed, laying one big palm on the little chap's hot forehead. He did not speak, just sat and stroked the fevered brow with tenderness. On his face a dark look brooded. His eyes were absent, unhappy.

"Daddy, why couldn't I have just a _little_ puppy of my own?"

The father replied with obvious effort.

"You know, Frankie, we have one small dog already," said he with forced lightness.

"Oh! Kiki!"

"Couldn't you manage to make friends with Kiki?"

"_She_ doesn't really want Kiki to like me, Daddy." (Wise beyond his years, marvelled Miss Beaver.) "Kiki doesn't really like little boys."

"Oh, my God, Frankie, don't go to crying again! Don't you see that Daddy can't quarrel with Mother over a dog? Try to get well, old man, and we'll see then what we can do. How about a pony, son?"

The little boy disappeared under the sheet, refusing to reply. Miss Beaver could not bear his convulsive, hardly-controlled sobs, and turned an accusing face upon Frank Wiley III.

"Is it possible," she asked icily, "that Frank's mother would actually refuse him so small a thing as a puppy, if it meant the merest chance of

his getting better?"

The face turned to hers was gloomy, the voice impatient.

"Oh, good God! Was ever a man in such a damnable situation? My dear Miss Beaver, ask the doctor to tell you how much influence I have in this household, before you blame me for not taking a firm stand with a woman as nervous and temperamental as Mrs. Wiley. I'd give my life willingly to bring my boy back to health but unhappily I'm not like the founders of our family. Some day I'll show you our family album. You'll find it easy to trace the strong resemblance Frankie has to his forebears. Its the damnably high spirit he gets from them that is so stubbornly killing him now."

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He rose, wheeled about and went to the door. Paused. Still with that brooding dark look on his face he turned to her again.

"If my death would make it any easier for Frank, I wouldn't hesitate a moment. I'm a failure. It wouldn't matter. But I feel that by living and watching over him I'm standing between my boy's development as an individual, and the subtlest, softest peril that could possibly threaten him. I would rather he died, if he cannot bring about what he wills for his own development. As for me, I ... I am a dead man walking futilely among the living."

With that, he swung out of the room.

Miss Beaver knelt by the boy's bed, murmuring persuasively to him as she strove to make him check his hysterical sobs.

"Frankie, you really must stop crying. You're too big a chap to cry and it only makes you worse. If you're a good boy to-day and eat your food, I'll let your grandfather bring the little dog tonight," she promised rashly.

The sheet turned down and Frank's reddened face peered at her plaintively.

"That was my _great_ -grandfather," he assured her gravely.

"Well, great or great-great, it's all the same," she conceded good-humoredly.

"Do you really think he'll bring Spot tonight?"

"Of course he will. But you must eat your meals, take a long nap, and stop crying."

"Oh, I promise!" the boy cried eagerly.

The day, Miss Beaver was told later, was uneventful. She had remained with the day nurse until Doctor Parris had made his visit. The doctor had been much pleased to find his small patient in good spirits and congratulated himself upon having put Miss Beaver on the case.

"If our young friend continues to improve like this, Miss Beaver," he joked, "we'll have him playing football within a month." He lowered his voice for her ear only. "Has anything particular come under your notice that might account for this agreeable change?"

Miss Beaver's forehead wrinkled slightly. She regarded the doctor from narrowed, thoughtful eyes.

"Tell me, Doctor Parris, if it isn't asking too much, why Mr. Wiley is a Man-Afraid-of-his-Wife?"

The doctor could not repress an involuntary chuckle.

"Come now, nurse, don't you think you're asking rather a good deal?"

"No, I don't," retorted Miss Beaver shortly. "Nor do you think so, either. What I'm trying to get at is, why Mr. Wiley lets Mrs. Wiley prevent him from giving Frank a puppy that he wants?"

The doctor regarded her thoughtfully.

"So it's a pup the boy wants. Ha, hum!" he uttered.

"I'm asking you," she repeated impatiently.

"Oh! Eh! Well! Mrs. Wiley, you have undoubtedly discerned, is one of those self-centered egotists who simply cannot permit people to live any way but her way. She won't have another dog in the house because it might interfere with the comfort of that silly damn--excuse me--Pom of hers. If Frank were a bit older and could feign a penchant for the Pom and his mother got the idea that the animal's affection might be alienated from her, she would at once get the child another dog, just to keep him away from Kiki."

"All of which sounds subtle but isn't very helpful," decided Miss Beaver with unflattering directness. "I've told Mr. Wiley that I thought a dog might interest his son and Mr. Wiley replies that his wife won't let him get one. There is something more behind this and it's obvious you don't want to tell me."

"Oh, hang it, nurse! You always manage to get your own way with me, don't you? I'll probably have to marry you one of these days, so I can keep the upper hand," he grinned. "Well, then, Wiley is a weak sister and oughtn't to be. He's completely under his chorus-girl wife's thumb. He lost a good bit in Wall Street and what's left is in her name, so

he's got to watch his step until he's recouped his losses.

"If he were like his father or his grandfather ... but he isn't," snapped the doctor vexedly. "Now, this boy here, he's a throw-back, young Frank is. He's the spittin' image of the founder of the family and I'm willing to wager he's got the grit and determination that once endowed old Frank Wiley I."

"I've observed," murmured Miss Beaver, "that you and his father call the boy Frank, while his mother refers to him as Francis."

"That's her hifalutin way of putting on the dog, nurse," Doctor Parris grinned wickedly. "His name on the birth certificate is Frank but she'd make a girlish Francis of him if she had her own way. For some reason she isn't getting it. Her husband sticks to the old family name of Frank and the boy won't answer to Francis."

"She has a healthy respect for the first old Frank Wiley. If you were to see the family album, nurse, you'd be quick to catch the look in the old boy's eyes. Nobody ever put anything over on that lad, believe me."

"I've no doubt of that," thought Miss Beaver to herself, the indomitable countenance of her midnight visitor clear before her mind's eye. It was astonishing, that strong family resemblance. Aloud she snapped: "Family album, indeed! What I'm after is to get permission for this child to have a pet. I'm positive it would make all the difference in the world to him."

"You won't get permission, nurse. Mrs. Frank won't have any other pets around to bother precious Kiki," he said grimly.

"Not if it's a matter of life or death?" she persisted.

"She would laugh at your putting it just that way," growled the doctor, an absent expression stealing over his kindly face.

"Well, we'll see what we'll see," observed Miss Beaver cryptically, her mouth an ominous tight red line.

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The doctor suddenly spoke close to her ear, an odd note in his voice. "I'm going to prescribe something very unusual, nurse. Tomorrow night a covered basket will be delivered here for you. Take it into the boy's room and open it if he awakens during the night. Understand?"

"I can't say I do, Dr. Parris."

"You will," he promised. "I'll take that basket and its contents when I come around for my morning call. Unless," he told her grimly, "I can see my way to make the prescription stick."

It was with the utmost anxiety that Miss Beaver awaited the coming that night of old Mr. Wiley. The day nurse had told her that Frank had eaten a good lunch and what for him was a hearty supper. He had agreed to sleep if he were awakened the moment Spot arrived, and Miss Beaver had accepted his whispered offer. To her relief, he fell asleep immediately, natural color on his thin cheeks.

Mr. Wiley's light tap came on the door panel. She met his grave smile with a soft exclamation of welcome. The small dog was tucked under one arm and he paused to warn her with that admonitory touch of one finger to his lips that the secret of his visits must be preserved. She nodded comprehension, leaned over the sleeping boy and whispered softly in his ear.

He stirred, opened drowsy eyes. Then he pulled himself up on his pillow, reaching thin hands out to the spotted dog which nipped playfully at him.

"Isn't he wonderful? When may I have him all the time?"

"When you're well and don't need a night nurse," promised Miss Beaver rashly and was rewarded by a broad smile from the courtly old gentleman who tipped back his white-maned head and laughed silently but whole-heartedly.

"I'll get well at once, nurse. Don't you think I might be well enough tomorrow? Or the day after? Not," he added politely, making Miss Beaver's heart ache with his childish apology, "not that I want you to leave, you know."

"That will be for the doctor to decide, Frank. But the more you eat and sleep and grow happy in your heart, the faster you'll get well," advised Miss Beaver earnestly.

For a long happy hour young Frank fraternized with the fox-terrier while the old gentleman sat silently observing him, a grimly humorous smile hovering about his firm lips. Then the boy's eyes began to cloud sleepily and much to Miss Beaver's surprise and pleasure Frank relinquished his canine playmate and fell asleep, a blissful smile curving his childish mouth as he breathed with soft regularity.

Then old Mr. Wiley picked up the puppy, tucked it under one blue-clad arm and again admonishing Miss Beaver with a finger athwart his lips, tiptoed from the room, closing the door behind very gently.

The nurse thought with a sigh of relief that the old gentleman had looked both pleased and gratified. She herself could hardly wait for morning, and for the day to pass, and was both pleased and encouraged herself when she went on duty the next night. Frank had asked to sit up for supper and when Miss Beaver entered the room he manfully refused the

day nurse's assistance back to bed. The day nurse's up-lifted brows betrayed her astonishment at the sudden turn for the better the young patient had taken.

"I'm almost well," piped up Frank Wiley IV, the moment the door closed behind the day nurse. "Tomorrow, the doctor says, I can sit out in the garden in the sun. Couldn't I have Spot then?"

"You just leave that to me," said Miss Beaver determinedly. "I may have much to say about your keeping Spot, Frank."

In her heart she was in reality panic-stricken for she knew that pretty Mrs. Wiley would indifferently laugh off the idea that ownership of a dog could mean returned health to her little son. Upon Frank Wiley III Miss Beaver felt no reliance could be placed; he was an uxorious weakling. Her unfounded hope rested on old Mr. Wiley alone; old Mr. Wiley whose firm mouth and implacable dark eyes made her feel that he, and he alone, held the key to the situation. That he had realized young Frank's need and had filled it, albeit in secret, gave her to believe that he would also furnish such good reason for yielding to young Frank's boyish yearning as would make Mrs. Frank retire in disorder from any contest of clashing wills.

But when the old gentleman stepped into the room that night he did not carry the little dog under his arm; what he had was something bulkier. He stopped beside the basket which had been sent to Miss Beaver and which she had not yet opened. He leaned down and released the lid. A little fox-terrier jumped out and stood, one small paw upheld, its head cocked to one side.

Miss Beaver drew in a quick gasping breath of admiring amazement at what she realized was the doctor's unusual prescription. If only old Mr. Wiley would stand by, to uphold it, she felt that the boy would recover. She drew his attention with a gesture.

"See how nicely our patient's coming along, Mr. Wiley," she whispered. "Oh, please, won't you make them let him keep the little dog Doctor Parris sent him? You can. I know you can."

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Old Mr. Wiley leaned over the bed, apparently taking pleased note of the faint color on the boy's cheeks. He smiled with obvious satisfaction. He lifted his head, met Miss Beaver's pleading eyes, and nodded emphatically. Then he slackened his hold on whatever he had tucked under one arm and deposited it at the foot of the bed, meeting Miss Beaver's questioning eyes with a significant narrowing of his own. She looked at the thing, then up at him, puzzled. What he had brought in was one of those huge, plush-covered atrocities with tall ivory letters on the front that proclaimed it to be a Family Album. She surmised that this must be the album which the doctor had said she should look over to note

how closely the small boy in the bed resembled his ancestors.

With a light gesture old Mr. Wiley relegated the album to the background, his glance seeking the fox-terrier that still hesitated in the middle of the room. Miss Beaver understood. She gently wakened the small patient, who sat up rubbing sleepy eyes expectantly. The dog, sensing a play-mate, bounded upon the bed and began lapping at Frank's eager fingers with small whimperings.

"He loves me. Don't you, Spot? Look, nurse. He has black spots over his eyes, bigger than I remembered them. And he seems littler tonight, doesn't he? But he knows me. Gee, I wish I could keep him all the time."

Old Mr. Wiley sat silently in a comfortable chair at the shadowy back of the room as he had done on his previous visits but his severe old features softened as he watched the happy child and the antics of the little dog. When at last Frank's eyes grew humid and heavy with sleep, and he began to slip down on his pillow, he clung to his canine playmate, refusing to relinquish the puppy which had cuddled cosily against him.

Old Mr. Wiley's heavy brows lifted into a straight line over his high nose. A grimly ironical smile drew up the corners of his mouth. He made a gesture of resignation. His humorously twinkling eyes met the consternation in Miss Beaver's but he appeared pleased and unmoved at the prospect of the dog's remaining with the boy. He rose from his comfortable chair, drew a deep breath, again touched the admonitory finger to his lips and withdrew, still smiling. The door closed quietly behind his stately blue-clad figure.

Miss Beaver told herself agitatedly that he had no business to throw the onus of the whole situation onto her shoulders; but even while she resented this high-handed behavior she was inwardly aware with one of her strong intuitions that old Mr. Wiley knew indubitably what he was about, and that at the psychological moment he would justify her in permitting the dog to remain with young Frank.

She was in no hurry the following morning to turn over her patient to the day nurse and lingered on in the hope that Doctor Parris would appear early enough to get the dog away, as he had half hinted. That he would do his best to make the prescription stick she saw immediately after he took a single look at young Frank who sat up nimbly, his color normal for the first time in weeks. The suppressed excitement in the atmosphere Doctor Parris could hardly be expected to understand until the boy drew back the covers to show the inquisitive black nose and beady eyes hidden beneath.

"Gee, Doctor Parris, isn't he just the cutest dog you ever saw?" chuckled young Frank. "Oh, gosh, here _she_ comes!"

The cover was whipped over the dog, whose whimpers subsided with

uncommonly good sense. Perhaps young Mrs. Wiley might not have felt the puppy's presence but Kiki's sharp nose was not so easily put upon. Kiki, with a shrill bark, scrambled from her arms and leaped upon the bed where he began scratching furiously at the cover which Frank was holding desperately but vainly against this unexpected onslaught.

"What on earth ..." began his mother, her eyes going from Kiki to Miss Beaver's harried expression. "Oh! A nasty little dog right in Francis's bed! Francis, push it out! It's probably full of fleas. How did that nasty little mongrel get in here?"

"This pup isn't a mongrel, Mrs. Wiley," snapped the doctor. "Anyone can see with half an eye it's a pedigreed animal."

She disregarded him. "Frank! Come here! Nurse, you should have known better than to allow that horrid little mutt...."

Frank Wiley III almost ran into the room, obviously distressed over something quite different from his wife's trouble.

"Somebody has meddled with one of our family portraits," he cried with obvious agitation. "It's been damaged...."

"Oh, bother the family portraits!" shrilled his wife, highly exasperated. "Look at the nasty common dog this nurse has let Francis have right in his bed! I never heard of such nerve! Call Mason! Have him put this dog out immediately!"

"I'll take the dog, if it's to be put out," growled Doctor Parris. "I know a good dog when I see one," he muttered resentfully.

"Let _me_ see that dog!" exclaimed Frank Wiley III in a strangely grave voice. He pushed the frantically excited Kiki from the bed to the floor. He drew back the cover from the little dog huddled apprehensively against young Frank's thin body. "Oh, good Lord! It's incredible! It just isn't possible!"

"Isn't it?" snapped his wife, looking with distastefully wrinkled nose at her husband's chalky face, wide staring eyes. "Well, here it is and out it goes. Ring for Mason, Frank, at once. I want this dirty little mongrel out!"

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Without paying the slightest attention, her husband turned to Miss Beaver. As he did so, his staring eyes fell upon the ornate plush album on the foot of the bed.

"How did that get here?" he demanded.

"Old Mr. Wiley brought it last night," admitted Miss Beaver, who was

feeling a trifle indignant at the old gentleman's defection.

"Old Mr. Wiley?" echoed Doctor Parris; stupidly, for him, Miss Beaver thought. "Old Mr. Wiley?"

Frank Wiley III, his voice shaky, almost shouted at her.

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me that old Mr. Wiley was here and brought that album?"

"I may as well tell you now as ever," snapped Miss Beaver and deliberately turned her back upon Mrs. Frank, addressing herself pointedly to Doctor Parris and the boy's father. "The old gentleman has been in here every night to see Frank since I've been on duty and he brought his little dog, and in my opinion his little dog should get the credit of any improvement in the patient's condition."

Frank Wiley III picked up the bulky volume and began turning the thick cardboard pages. His hands trembled; his face was queerly pasty.

"Turn the pages yourself, nurse, will you? See if you can find old Mr. Wiley's picture."

Miss Beaver flipped the cardboard pages one after another until a familiar face looked quizzically at her from a faded old daguerrotype. She put on finger triumphantly on it.

"Here he is. This is old Mr. Wiley."

Mrs. Frank tiptoed nearer, took a single look, then with a shrill scream fainted into Doctor Parris's convenient arms.

He muttered under his breath: "Superstitious damsel, this." Of Miss Beaver he asked drily as he deposited his fair burden distastefully in the big chair where the old gentleman had been sitting on his nightly visits: "My dear Miss Beaver, are you very certain old Mr. Wiley has been dropping in of nights?"

"Of course I am," declared Miss Beaver indignantly. "Is it so astonishing that I recognize a face I've been seeing now for three consecutive nights?"

"This is unbelievable," Frank Wiley III gasped.

Said the doctor gravely: "I ask you to be so very certain, nurse, because the original of that picture has been dead for over fifteen years."

As those astonishing words fell on Miss Beaver's ears, she turned from the doctor in sheer resentment.

"I don't care for practical jokes," said she with dignity to the boy's apparently stupefied father, "and I must say I resent being made sport of. I tell you plainly that old Mr. Wiley, the man in this picture," and she tapped her finger impressively on the album page, "has spent a couple of hours with Frankie and me every night since I've been on duty here, and that's _that_!"

"Then that's settled," exclaimed the boy's father in a loud and determined voice. "The dog stays."

As if miraculously restored, Mrs. Frank sprang to her feet.

"Is that _so_? Well, my dear husband, I'm afraid you're sadly mistaken. The dog goes!" She gave her husband glare for glare, the rouge standing in two round spots on her white face.

His look was one of active dislike. "We'll see about that, Florry. All of you, come out into the hall. I want you to see something. Then let anyone say Frank can't keep that dog!"

He beckoned imperatively and they followed down the great staircase into the great hall below, where he stopped under a gilt-framed oil portrait, life size. His finger pointed significantly.

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Miss Beaver deciphered the small label at the front of the massive frame. The painting was a portrait of Frank Wiley I, the founder of the Wiley family. Her eyes rose higher to really look at the picture for the first time since she had been in the house. It was the living likeness of old Mr. Wiley and it almost seemed to her that, as she stared, one of his eyelids quivered slightly as if in recognition of her belated admiration for his diplomatic procedure. Beside him on the painted table one of his fine hands lay negligently or rather, seemed to be lying higher than the table proper, resting on ... was it just bare canvas?

"Look for yourself, Florry! Where is the fox-terrier that was painted sitting on the table under Grandfather's hand?"

Young Mrs. Wiley stared pallidly at the likeness of the founder of the Wiley clan. "White paint," she conjectured. Then, peering closer at the canvas: "Somebody's scraped off the paint where the dog used to be."

Stiff and grim, his own man now, her husband faced her.

"Does my boy keep that dog?"

Behind them sounded a low exclamation. At the head of the staircase stood young Frank, the puppy tucked securely under one arm.

"Nobody's going to take away my little dog that Great-grandfather Wiley

brought me," cried the lad stoutly, black eyes flashing, thin face determined and unyielding.

"Don't let that dog come near me!" screamed Mrs. Frank and went into a genuine attack of hysteria. "He isn't _real_!"

Doctor Parris exchanged a look with Miss Beaver, whose face was pale but contented.

"I always knew you were psychic," he whispered, brows drawn into a puzzled scowl. "That's how the old gentleman, God rest his wilful soul, could get through."

"I wondered that he never spoke a single word! Now that it's over, I think I'm going to faint," decided Miss Beaver shakily.

"Nonsense," snapped the doctor with scant courtesy. "But _she_ is well scared, thank God. I hardly think she will interfere much in future with young Frank. And by the looks of him, the boy's father has had his backbone stiffened considerably."

"That painted dog?" whispered Miss Beaver's tremulous lips.

"Eh? Yes. Ah, yes, the dog," murmured the doctor, too casually.

"You--you--dared!" uttered Miss Beaver incoherently under her breath.

"Not altogether," he protested against her ear.

He pointed upward. Miss Beaver's eyes followed that gesture and met the admonitory, inscrutable, but very gratified pictured eyes of old Mr. Wiley.



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